

Presentation of Christ/Candlemas

Resources and ideas for events, celebrations, services and more – indoors and out.

What is Candlemas?

Forty days after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph went to the Temple in Jerusalem for a ritual presentation of their baby to God, as required by Jewish Law. We read about this in **Luke 2:22-40**.

They met a man named Simeon, who described Jesus as a 'light' for all the people of the world. They also met an elderly prophet, Anna, who thanked God for Jesus. Anna recognised Jesus as key to God's plan of salvation for all people.

The Christian festival celebrating these events – formally known as 'The Presentation of Christ' – is also called 'Candlemas' because on this day, in the times long before electricity, people would bring candles to church to be blessed in recognition of Jesus the 'light of the world'. On Candlemas night, many people place lit candles in their windows at home.

Somewhere to start

Here's a way to introduce the theme.

Display a selection of candles – tealights, scented, birthday cake, different shapes, sizes and colours. Ask people to identify them. Can anyone think of other types or uses for candles? Why do we use them? When? Invite everyone to choose and hold a candle and then explain the reasons why they like it. If appropriate, encourage people to light their candles.

Thank you, O God, that you said: 'Let there be light', and the world was no longer in darkness.

Thank you for the gift of your Son who brings light into our lives. **Amen.**

Somewhere to finish

Cut out current news headlines from around the world. Stick these onto a large sheet of paper – if possible, covering the paper completely. Cut a large candle shape from coloured card and stick it on top of the headlines. Beneath the candle, write 'Jesus – light of the world' with marker pens or by cutting letters from card and sticking them on.

Lord, light up the path for me wherever I may go, that I may know your presence, and be grateful for your love. **Amen.**

Follow-up ideas

- Decorate the base of a candle with tissue paper and light the candle on the evening of Candlemas: <https://easypapercrafts.com/tissue-paper-candle-craft-2/>
- Make little candle cakes and give some to a person of a different generation: <https://www.sainsburysmagazine.co.uk/recipes/cakes/candle-cakes>
- Watch a video of the *Song of Simeon*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-53wzYwzGY>



Daisy Barnes

Something from the Bible

Luke 2:22-40

This is the last of the stories about Jesus as a baby in the Bible. It is read 40 days after Christmas, echoing that this is how long after his birth, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple for a purification ritual required by Jewish Law. What makes the occasion unique is that a man called Simeon recognises in the baby Jesus, the coming of the long-awaited Messiah, and the Saviour of the world.

A read and share idea

Light a candle, torch or lantern at appropriate moments in the story (12 in all), saying: Here is a light for Jesus. Here are lights for Joseph and Mary. This one lights them to Jerusalem. Here are lights for the Law and the Temple. These are lights for Simeon and the Holy Spirit. Here is a light for the Gentiles, and one for the falling and rising. Here is a light for Anna. And this one lights the family home.

What could we learn from this passage?

Simeon looks back into Jewish history and the promises God made to his people; but he also looks 'forward to the consolation of Israel'. Are you more oriented to look back or look forward? What does God want to remind you of? What does God want you to look forward to?

Simeon's words to Mary warn that the gift of the Messiah comes with complications – it will shake things up and bring anguish as well as joy. What examples are there in your life of things that have this double effect?

Explore... Candlemas

Choose from these activities to help people explore the theme. Use the spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters (see Spiritual styles key on the inside front cover) to help you plan and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God.

Craft activity

You will need: candle design template (see [WEB](#)), printed on white or pale yellow A4 card; crayons or paint.

- Cut each card in half and fold along the dotted line. Colour the flames in rainbow colours – it will give the effect of light passing through a prism.
- Write a message inside such as: 'A greeting at Candlemas bringing you light and blessing'. Or you could write the words of the prayer of thanksgiving (below).

Musical activities

Listen to:

- 'Simeon's Song' by Tommy Walker: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHP-mMZVwUo>
- 'Light of the World' by Lauren Daigle: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cLhaZIBSpo

Or, join together and sing:

- 'When to the Temple, six weeks young' (WGRG, HSNW 76): <https://www.ionabooks.com/when-to-the-Temple/>
- 'When Jesus Christ was eight days old' (Michael Perry – in *Singing to God*) https://jubilate.co.uk/songs/when_jesus_christ_was_eight_days_old

Intergenerational activity

- Set up four stations, for four parts of the story: waiting, seeing, blessing, thanking. Invite people to visit each station, spending as little or as much time as they wish at each one.

1. Waiting

You will need: roll of paper, pens, images of big events from the last century.

- Roll out a long strip of paper to make a timeline, marking on it decades from the 1920s to the 2020s and beyond. Provide images of big events and news stories from the last 100 years for people to add to the appropriate place (include some local stories if possible) along the timeline.
- Encourage people to mark on the timeline their birth or significant moments in their life or that of the community/church, and to share stories with other generations present, about things they remember happening. Invite people to write their hopes for the future. Where is God in the waiting and hoping?

2. Seeing

You will need: images that can be seen in more than one way, such as the classic 'candlestick or two faces? <https://www.optical-illusionist.com/category/double-meanings/>; the painting 'The Presentation in the Temple' by Alvaro Pirez: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437298>

- Display some double meaning images, and ask: What do you see? Are the images one, or the other, or both?



- Then display the Pirez painting, asking again: What do you see? Add some commentary: 'Mary and Joseph saw two elderly prophets who bless their baby. Simeon and Anna see an infant who is the anointed one of God (Messiah). What do you see in Jesus? What do you see in those who are younger and older than you?'

3. Blessing

You will need: cards with a simple printed blessing (e.g. 'Go in peace and be light to the world.')

- Simeon blessed Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Invite people to take a card and to read it as a blessing to someone older or younger than them; give their chosen person the card and ask them to do the same, setting up a chain reaction of blessing.

4. Thanking

You will need: candles of different sizes.

- Elderly Anna gave thanks for the child. Encourage people to think of someone from a different generation who is a blessing to them, and invite them to light a candle in thanksgiving.

Prayer in the Celtic style

This could be spoken during a procession or while candles are being lit. Each line could be followed by a response such as: **Lighten our darkness.**

As we light/carry our candles, light in our hearts a flame of love for all we meet this day.

As we light our candles, light in us a flame of love for family, friends and neighbours.

As we light our candles, light in us a flame of love for people near and far, friend or enemy.

We light/carry our candles in the presence of our creator, who separated the light from the darkness.

We light/carry our candles in the presence of the Son, who is the light of the world.

We light/carry our candles in the presence of the Holy Spirit, with us at all times and in all places.

Additional resources on the [WEB](#)

